

Postlapsarian

Senior Paper

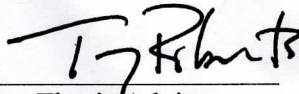
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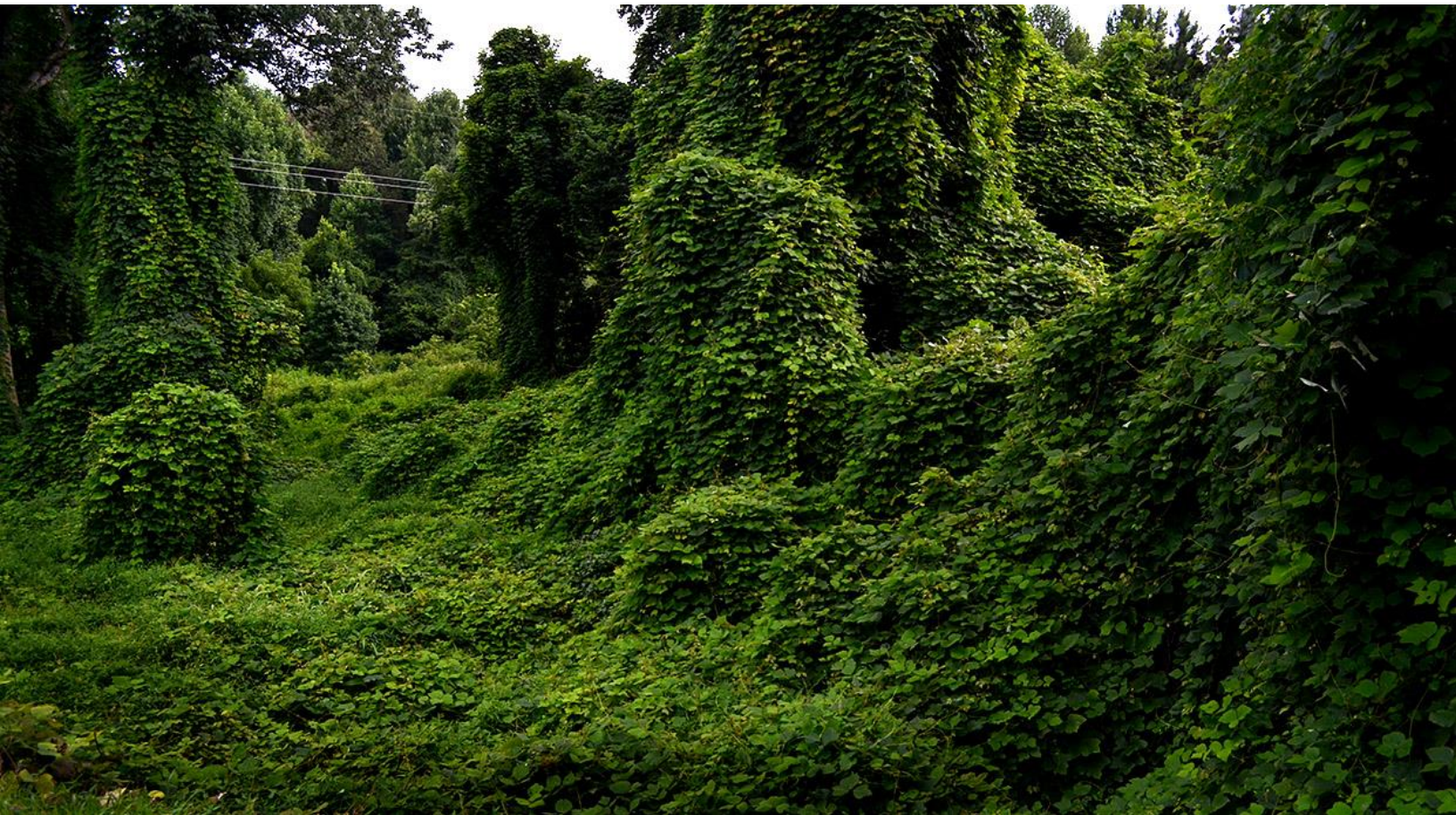
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By Savannah Wade

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“For he was a Southerner, and he knew that there was something wounded in the South. He knew that there was something twisted, dark, and full of pain which Southerners have known with all their lives--something rooted in their souls beyond all contradiction, about which no one had dared to write, of which no one had ever spoken.” – You Can’t Go Home Again by Thomas Wolfe

Introduction

This book is a goodbye letter, a bleeding song, a haunting reminder of every piece that has created and formed my life and fate. I was asked why did you choose to write this? What does it give you in return? For most the answer is to save ones life. While other things have saved my life, this growing and unrelenting parasite has not. It is not saving me, instead it has been hurting me, keeping these stories locked up. The South my entire life has felt like a church dress that's two sizes too small.

There is so much to unpack from what the South is. Its marriage of states: North Carolina, Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana in its gold and graveyard circumstance, The Virginias, Texas on a good day, and Florida when the marshes come out to play. Every state with 300 years of known history and the history beyond that is an imprint pressed upon the side of a mountain that gives a shadow over the country. Postlapsarian is an eyeglass over where the shadow falls in Western North Carolina and what evil has festered here amongst the vines and valleys.

The shadow has always been a ghost in these rolling foothills. A haunting figure stuck on every back, escaping out of every textbook, and finally, chained the feet to the thriving kudzu crawling up your leg. That ghost has been prying on my shoulder, whispering how I am incarcerated to the very ground I have been raised on.

So this book is a goodbye letter, an exorcism made in ink, a plea for forgiveness, maybe even a recognition of something living amongst us in the mountains and perhaps before I go, I'd like to meet it.

Table of Contents

Prologue: Genesis

- I. Antebellum
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Unitas Fratium
 - c. A Southern Exorcism
 - d. Put Down Your Axe
 - e. Benevolent
 - f. Take Up Your Axe
- II. The Foundling Dynasty
 - a. Introduction
 - b. The Old House
 - c. Pagan Child
 - d. An Education
 - e. Self-Immolation (Dear Little One)
- III. Cesspool of Sin
 - a. High Hanging Mothlight
 - b. The Revenant
 - c. O Lost
 - d. Why Do You Glorify The South? Revelations

Genesis

“The mountains got crystals in ‘em you see”

Spicy mustard drips down my fingers, my ear leaned
Towards him.

This guy’s words keeps floating in the air. Even my head tuned, I caught his message
Late between each bite.
He keeps leaning in, away from his table of friends
hazy themselves on free whiskey.

“Had them for centuries, its why people come here to heal.”
Every time he exhales between sharp breathes,
beer hovers in sweet space between us.

My hands wave, splattering some condiments to the ground.
“Like tuberculosis in the 20’s—”

He nods, furiously, blonde beard dusted with dirt.
“And the rehabs, clinics, all these buildings popping out of promises to cure all ills.”

I lick my lips then suck my fingers dry of grease.
“But— “

“No one knows, they don’t get it.” Taps a thick finger against his skull.
“I know”

He looks to the people he is sitting with then to whom I’m sitting with.
Leans in, **too close**, his breath the only barrier between us.
“They stopped working. People came here to heal, but they get trapped.
They can’t leave...”

The grease, thick and sweet red, pools in my palm.

“We can’t leave” His eyes gloss over and stare up to the distant mountain, dotted with lights.
It reared its head at us.
“Because its all of us, see?” Don’t you see?

Antebellum

“The forests of North Carolina waited several millennia for man to walk and live in them.” – The Tar Heel State: A History of North Carolina by Milton Ready

Introduction

The history of North Carolina has become something of a ghost story. The British colonizers attempting to settle on our coast went missing and all that remained of them was carved into a tree. North Carolina's spirit exists in the trees. From Croatoan, carved on the coast to the sea of pinelands curving mountain side. The trees have been the eyes and ears to the true history of the state. They aren't subjected to the folktales crafted that make our men immortal and our women pure. That's where the ghost stories start.

Western North Carolina became populated once the trees started to be cut down. When the trees were cleared, the parasitic nature of the settlers was to expand and populate. When the Moravians arrived in their ship *Two Brothers* in Savannah, Georgia, they were lost in their sense of home. Then they arrived in North Carolina, following the mountain shadow, and joined as a parasite. With the parasite of people, came the spread of ideas. The incarnation of evil in its desire to possess, from the human body to land stained by native blood to the word of God, heard differently from every mouth. Now the ghost story sounds the same as our gospel of history, haunting just the same. This history is taught in the home, not the school. It's repeated while a child is tucked in bed or a woman hums her mother's song while cleaning eggs. So the ghosts live on, at the foot of our bed and at the foot of the mountains.

*Unitas Fratrum*¹

I. We began in our infancy as seedlings
Born abraised, bruised, abused by the kindness of war
Then they buried us loosely and begged
“What is happening? Must the whole world perish?”
For the world did and remained, charred then ripened.
Our parish, a spade, was driven down. Who knows
Our word of God?
*Sola scriptura*² cannot reveal *pravda*³.
Bury the word, the very nature of our brethren
And let it flourish.

- II. On a page, History reverts to simplicity:
- Beginning 15th Century. Desire to reform the Catholic Church. For the footnote of the Vulgate says, *“they hunted, they gambled, they caroused. They committed adultery.”*
 - July 6th 1415. John Hus of Bohemia burns. Condemned at the stake with Eucharist stuffed down his throat *“Christ, thou Son of the Living God, have mercy.”*
 - 1457. The Hussites Revolt. We borrowed time, praised for favor, thrived on the vine. 200,000 in 400 congregations.
 - June 21st 1621. The vine has tilted and grew too close to the sun. *“God’s sun just rising in the east and reddening the sky and shining.”* Our time has come and gone, but out of decay, we will rise too.

III. *“As it was, the seeds were planted in the words of Hus. From those seeds came the Brethren of Bohemia, the ones we now call the Moravians.”*

IV. We began in our fallacy as vines.
Striving across the barren lands till the word ‘settlement’
parted our lips. We drank from the Savannah
in sinful fulfillment of this new domain, Americana.
Strive we did, forking creek and home through mountain
till our sinful fulfillment lead us to God’s Acre.

Take and take and take from forest and mountain side.
One hundred thousand acres no more could we abide.

¹ In 1457 a group of [Hus’s] most earnest supporters organized themselves under the name Unitas Fratrum (Unity of Brethren). (1 Capps)

² Latin: scripture alone

³ Slovak: truth

It is here, we strive for paradise, far from *domov*.⁴
In this shadow of mountain where others, so many others have died.
Is this heaven or is it a different place and the Living God replied
“*My kingdom is not of this world.*”⁵

⁴ Slovak: home

⁵ John 18:36

A Southern Exorcism

Sweet words lured you here.
The fruit ripe and glossed hovering above your head.
This patch of energy and living
in the curve of the valley.
A breath of God drifts down and down the
cool green to its heart,
where you sat staring at the low bearing fruit.
Your mother told you: never take another's food.
Even the wild berry bushes and spuds spouting in the dirt
belong to God himself.
Yet your fingers slid around the slick skin and plucked it,
echoing into the sky.
Teeth dug into the firm flesh of red, sugar dripping from the corner of your lips.
The needs came soon after.
Lying in bed, the heat getting to you.
The heat never got to you before.
Yet now with only moonlight guiding your hand
under the thin cotton slip,
You can no longer blame the heat,
but rather the heart you left behind in the valley.

Then the voices came, lullabies from the forefathers
descended into your inner ear. They planted
only the thought not the temptation.
Terry Richards didn't speak much, but smiled when
you hung up linens Saturday morning.
A thick piece of blonde wheat chewed to the center stalk
tickled the nape of your neck, while you
bent over the barn's wooden gate.
Terry kissed you after.
Before you adored it, called it love.
Now it burned against your lips,
until you kissed another,
but the cycle continued.

The priest saw you exiting the wood with Miller's boy.
Buttoning the top of his trousers, that boy's cheeks flushed.
Yet you, cold and collected, brushed him away with a smile
goophered⁶ good. Town starts to whisper in market
"That boys been touched something dark."
While trading gossip for honey and butchered beef.
So the priest, in his wisdom, spoke to Cotton Alderson, the law man

⁶ Hoodoo term meaning conjured

and Abe Miller, the father concerned with his damned boy.

They came in the night.

Held you by the arms, knees spread on the dirt floor and praised the superior being
knowing that God was hanging from the cloud
for a peek at the girl touched by Satan.
You said a lot of things, words they didn't know,
stuff they'd know if they opened anything other than the holy book.
It sounded like tongues, the old language they assumed
was common in hell.
Trashing against the will of Cotton and Abe,
like a dove flying into stained glass during Sunday service.
First, you cried, salted tears worth a' ounce of heart.
All they saw, all they contest to was she thrashed
and the words she said, gritted against her teeth lashed them.
Stayed strong they did when you wished death upon them.
Death was the language they knew well.

So I listened, waiting in the corner, taking in that
carnal scent of envy, blood on dirt floors, and ripped fabric
Exposing a chest like a painting.

Cotton sentenced many to Death, the unfit, ne'er-do-wells,
The lovers of low caught en flagrante, women you see.
Spells he wished were cast upon him
to make him feel that flush, that heat.

All Abe knew, pressing the damp wooden cross into his palm,
God was there.
He needed to be: a father who'd understand that a boy needed to be protected.
Not that Abe was God, or God was Abe. But that they knew that fathers meant
the world to boys growing into men.

The priest kept screaming gospel, eyes never meeting your own
but you begged with him.
Bargained with Death to have it done quickly cause you ain't gonna change.
Music to my ears, girls like you.
Addicted to that heat, that old language cause you wanted more.
You wanted me.
Not the men who like my stench, and the power my name gave reason to their
salvation, but you, pure and touched
since that single bite in the valley.
Escape once sweet turns bitter under the tongue.
Women should have learned that by now, but even Eve,
with her rough palms and lips tasting of salt, begged

to see light again. Now they all it heat.
You cried out for Death in its glory, in its sovereignty
grant me— Cotton liked the sound of a fist meeting a woman's stomach.

I was there all right, watching you fight it out
like the best little tyke this side of the Mason Dixon line.
They beat you for hours, words spurted out along with globs of blood
drooling into a pool at your feet.
“Give me death,” you managed to say it, your gums sore,
blood leaking out from the back of your throat.
I wanted to watch more. See the very best parts of you
ground up to make their bread, but like a vision brought
from the big man upstairs. I saw you wouldn't be the first.
Fact is, darling, many more are coming.
In a couple years' time, Cotton will be pressing a hand to his stump of a leg and bleed out in a
field where no one knows his name.
Abe, a man of his word, protected his son by taking his place. Either way.
They were buried next to each other.

The priest, addicted to the gallows end, said his last prayer
On his back. In fact, by the hand of a beautiful woman with Union
Ties that bound him to his bed.
These men, girl, will suffer the sins of their father but right now
You, I can help.

I raised your chin and breathed in salvation.
You ain't gonna be bothered.
Not a bit.

Put Down Your Axe

I was shown a vision that I would be carried off to the war and have to suffer many things
Suffer as I have or once done in the comfort of my home
with a child upon my knee, a woman soon wife beside me, and the woods separating brother
and brother by border. I suffer with severance:
A child by cord, a wife by wedlock.
Suffer by liberty born of a patriot's dream, of a storm cradled nation that fell
into my arms, head nestled in my clavicle.
This is a father's anthem, a grasp for glory, a deliverance to draw first blood
Or no blood at all.
For we once were two brothers' hands clasped till the grasp was mistaken
for faking our union, a mountain marriage.
It is by that tree, yonder, near hearth and home where
once agreed on matrimony then turned to severance
of an old agreement of once was mine, remained mine.
It reeks of worth. But Brother,
count the rings, by the trees, by the torch baring phantom figures, by the hollow offerings of
metal wrapped around my woman soon wife's finger.

This war rages on and I will not fight in it.
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel,
but not I. For the hero I need be is at home.
Holding my child cross my chest to match his heartbeat
and my wife, fully formed and dedicated to thought
her oven saves us for another day.

I will not fight, though I stand here in front of a dozen black eyes.
I stare into them and say "*Forgive them for they do not know what they do*"
That tree sings to me still. Leaves to branches to the molten coil wrapped in its heart.
They have told my wife and son, "*we could not shoot such a man*".
Yet this rifle weighs me still and stiff on this route through the mountain.

“The ‘North’ should mind its own business and let us protect our Southern households from violence and outrage without interference or malevolent criticism.” – Rebecca Latimer Felton

Benevolent

My thighs are still sickly sweet despite the coming and going summer rain.
You have kissed them and pulled them apart like bread fresh baked from the main house kitchen.
I want to call you your old name, a favor of the old country,
but Chance suits you so.
Under our roof, you have never said my Christian name.
Not that it does any good. It’s a series of letters, said a certain way mean a certain thing.

You have gone off to dredge the river, flooded.
The mountain men asked you for help—we don’t need the trouble of saying no.
The dishes need tended to, the sheets tucked, folded, pressed, the floors swept of dirt and night
crawlers, the single silver polished, and dinner prepared
when you come stomping through that door, soaked foot to hip.

Chance, you did enough. By taking the sticks and logs and clearing their path to root their
sawmill.
No. They do not know what power is, how it floods, bleeds.
Those people, they are convinced it comes from them, their hand to whip, foot to backbone.
Nah. It’s in the very thing they abuse. We cultivate it so we know better than anyone.
It lives here, in the gap past creek and below mountain.
Our valley will get them soon enough.

Head to bed. I’ll be there soon, but first the dishes, the lights turned low, and the locks checked.
The thin wooden floors echo low making my way to the north facing window.
Moon’s high tonight, frowning onto the tiny farm land dotted with cabbages and collards,
pretty for picking for tomorrows summer day, but its tonight, and the world is quiet except
for the rustle of wind picking up the trees at the woods edge.
Something darting through the trunks.

I blow out the window’s candle, lay with Chance, praying towards the thing
like God living at the base of the mountain.

3-Year-Old Missing

Halt Search For

LAFOLLETTE, Tenn. (AP) — The organized search called off, Cumberland Mountain neighbors helped hunt today for a 3-year-old girl who disappeared while gathering nuts in the woods near here last Tuesday.

And the grieving father, choking back tears, vowed that "I'll never give up hope of finding her some day."

Campbell County Sheriff Willie Chapman announced last night the organized search, which at one time included 2,000 persons, was being dropped after 32 fruitless hours because to continue "will accomplish nothing."

The little girl, Minnie Haun, wandered away from a 4-year-old sister while her mother carried another sister, 14 months, into the woods in search of walnuts near their Wells Spring community home.

of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Haun. Haun, a tenant farmer who lives in a log cabin, said last night he believes the child was either dead or kidnapped, "not for money, but maybe by someone who wanted a child."

"If they don't find her body, I'll always believe she was kidnapped, and I'll never give up hope of finding her some day."

"I guess it's God's will," Haun said, tears streaming down his face. "And I don't know what we can do about it."

Wringing his hands, he said, "What I don't understand is how she disappeared so quickly."

Haun had searched untiringly since he learned the child was missing.

"We have done all a sheriff commented, 'I found no trace of th

Mountain 'Smoke' Defeats Searchers

GATLINBURG (UPI) — Heavy mist in the Great Smoky Mountains early today blocked the use of helicopters ferrying men into the search area for seven-year-old Dennis Martin of Knoxville, missing since Saturday afternoon.

Park officials transported hundreds of rescuers across the Jeep road over Bole Mountain and sent other crews on foot up drainage areas toward Spence Field where the boy was last seen about 4 p.m. Saturday.

Hundreds of others stood by for a break in the weather and the army helicopter explored park searching for a way

estimated about 400 rescuers dawn today, about double

Mr. and Mrs. William Martin, ay with his brother Douglas, a favorite camping site along ail on the Tennessee North



DENNIS MARTIN ... lost three days

A detachment of 100 Green Berets, on maneuvers in western North Carolina, joined the search late Monday with helicopters and communications units. The search was to be expanded today.

The unspoken fear of the searchers is of the bears. One stole a loaf of bread from a search shelter Monday. Snakes abound in the rhododendron tangles and underbrush.

Dennis, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Martin, became lost while at play with his brother Douglas, 9, at Spence Field, a favorite camping site along the Appalachian Trail on the border of Tennessee and North Carolina.

More On Page 4, Column 1

Missing

ROAN MOUNTAIN, Tenn. (AP) — An 8-year-old "city boy" missing for a week in rugged mountains along the Tennessee-North Carolina border was found Saturday, hungry and hallucinating but otherwise in good condition, authorities said.

A six-man search team found Michael Eugene Reel of Hickory, N.C., about 9:30 a.m. EDT in a blackberry thicket on Roan Mountain, 1½ miles from where he disappeared.

Although Michael's feet were wet, tender and swollen and he had several scratches and insect bites, "He appears to be in excellent, excellent shape," Carter County Sheriff William Crumley said.

Mystery Veils Disappearance Of Child in Smoky Mountain

NEWPORT, Tenn., March 19.—Taking the wrong fork in the road when he was turned back after attempting to follow his sisters to a country store in the Cosby section of this county, Abraham Lincoln Ramsay, three-year-old child of John Ramsay, has mysteriously disappeared in the wilds of the Smoky Mountains. The boy, instead of taking the road to his home, followed an unused mountain path, and was trailed for five miles toward the top of the Smokies, when all trace was lost.

Hundreds of highlanders who know every trail of the mountains have searched for the child since March 11, camping out at night and building fires in hope that they might attract the attention of the lost boy. Thinking that possibly young Ramsay had fallen into a creek near the scene of the disappearance, this stream has been dragged for miles without result. Some of the searchers express the opinion that the child, wearied by his wanderings, had fallen asleep and been devoured by a bear which was known to be in the neighborhood.

The mysterious disappearance has aroused the entire mountain section, both men and women abandoning their work and taking to the fastnesses in search of the lost child. The only clue that has been discovered is the little fellow's footprints on the lonely trail many miles from where he branched off on the wrong route, and these mute evidences of his presence there end so abruptly as to mystify the experienced mountaineers who are leading the searchers.

SCOUT'S BODY FOUND; LOST IN MOUNTAINS

Gatlinburg, Tenn., Feb. 18 (UPI) — The body of a 16-year-old Explorer Scout, who reportedly was fascinated by a television program concerning survival in the wilderness, was found in the rugged Great Smoky mountains today, 11 days after he became lost.

The body of Geoffrey Hague was located by a group of searchers led by a dog team trained in avalanche work. It was in a rough overgrown area, where Hague apparently had fallen while trying to find his way back to a hiking trail.

Officials said an examination of Hague's body showed he died of exposure within 24 hours after he became lost.

During the first two nights Hague was gone, 16 inches of snow fell. Temperatures dropped to around 12 degrees at night.

FBI May Join Hunt for Girl

East Tennessee

4 injured while searching for boy lost in Smokies

GATLINBURG (AP) — Four searchers were injured yesterday while hunting for an Alabama boy missing since Sunday.

The search for Brad Lavies, expanded amid freezing temperatures that made the rugged rain of the Great Smoky mountains treacherous. A light snow fell and temperatures hovered in the 20s and 30s.

One of the four searchers was seriously hurt. Two suffered from hypothermia, another had a twisted ankle and the fourth injured a knee.

They were carried out on a stretcher and taken by ambulance to a nearby hospital.

It's very difficult right now, it's very cold. If you are not dressed properly, that can cause

a lot of problems," ranger J.D. Lees said.

Nearly 300 people with backcountry experience from a host of local, state and federal agencies have been involved in the search. And more were coming, said ranger Bob Miller, spokesman for the national park.

"At some point, sure, we are going to have to scale this back," Miller said. "But we are not at that point yet."

The primary search area expanded yesterday to about 1,600 acres in and around Rainbow Falls.

Brad disappeared Sunday while on a 2½-mile hike with his parents, Nancy and Randy Lavies, his 12-year-old brother Chris and his brother's friend. ■

Take Up Your Axe
“These mountain women take a lot of killing”⁷

Take up your axe and slice me from jaw to groin.
Handle gripped and brace the belly, the head splitting my flesh open.
Inside lies
a familiar world. No name, known by touch alone of the stone ruins
that extend to the sky, a shadowed underbelly.
Place your hand against the stones once a wall or door or fallen path towards heaven.
Feel the grooves, the lumps that sway underneath a shield of kudzu.
That glorious reign yields on in this kingdom of light.
Bring your ear to the ground. Hesitant on your knees then lay upon the parasite.
The dirt underneath quietly hums with life. The wriggling of worms past roots, the slither of a
snake in wait, the breath of life vibrating the thickness.
But no heartbeat.
Stand amongst the parasite and look above to that high hanging moth light.
Not will’o’wisp or forgotten night, but it hovers still.
Growing and gaining—
The vine at your feet.
The mountain peak above, poised and brooding.
It lives still.
Take up your axe and follow me.

⁷ Thomas Wolfe, *Look Homeward, Angel*. 148

The Foundling Dynasty

“I suggest you write the stories you have heard, but state them as ‘legend.’ You may not even want to share them with anyone. Someone may know the truth of those stories. However, with each generation [they] become more dim, and perhaps that is a good thing.” – John Hawkins,
Historian for the Pipes Family

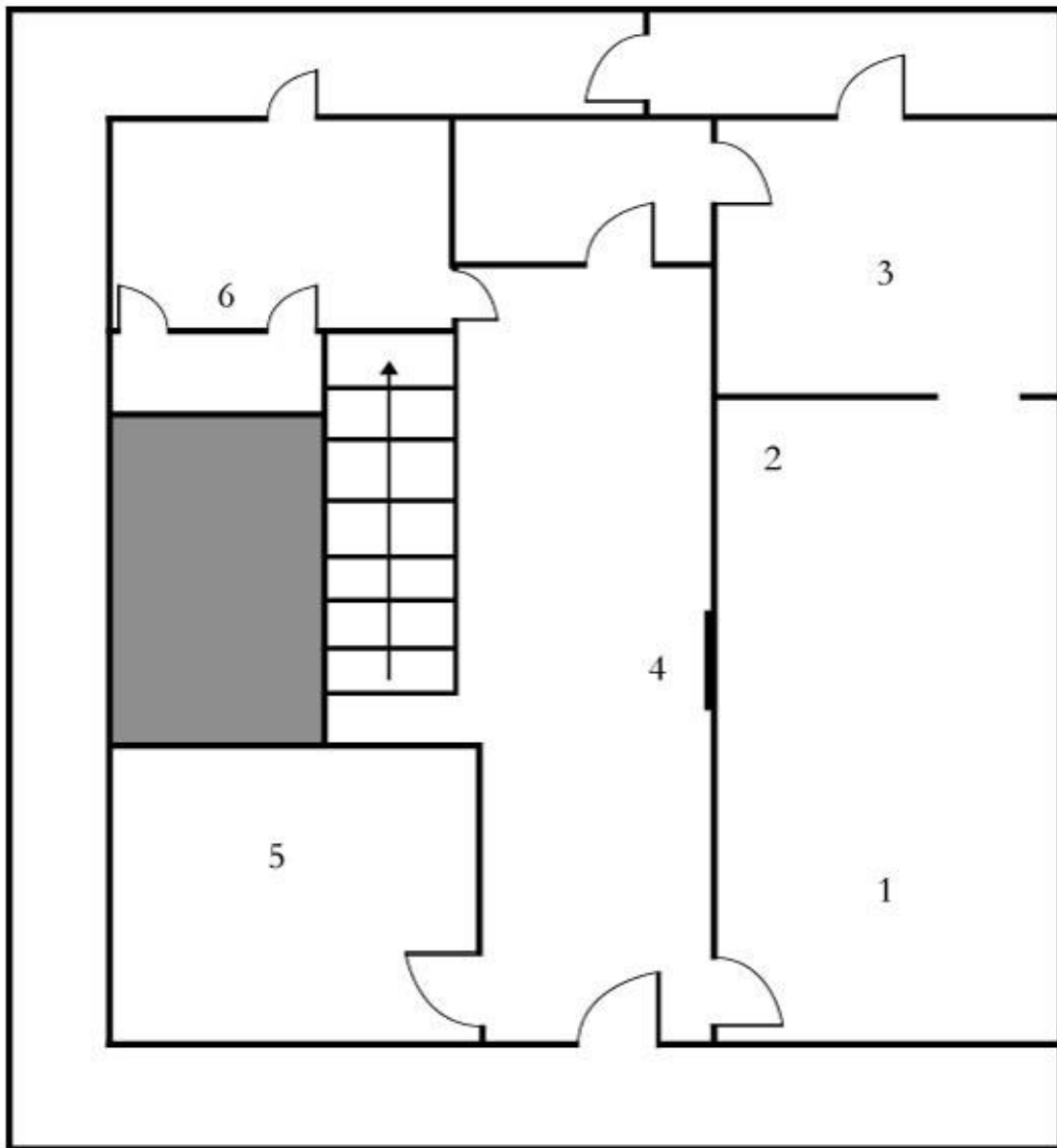
Introduction

The first time I learned about saints, I held one in my fingers. It was tucked in an old jewelry box discovered in the storage of The Old House, a house my family lived in before it became a home to me. It was a pendent, two toned in light and darker gold, carefully etched was the picture of a man holding another upon his back. Encircled the tiny thing was 'St. Christopher.' I remember holding it so dearly, stroking it with my thumb, hoping to feel the picture move to my touch. I'm sure I asked who he was, why we had such a necklace because rich things like this didn't belong to our family. My mother sat me down and said her step-dad was raised Catholic. Parted her fingers an inch and said "this close to becoming a priest." I held onto the necklace, hoping it'd do me well one of these days.

My family on my grandmother's side, though Southern Baptist to the bone, held to a revered orthodoxy. We had martyrs as ancestors, but made saints out of their memory. Memory was such a treasured thing. Grandma Lila, my great grandmother, didn't speak much to me about her past. Instead she made me fritters with thick slices of butter melting into a halo around the plate. We would watch all the soap operas where families fought each other and everyone else, but she would stay mute about who she was from. Instead of saying anything, all one had to do was look to the walls. I sat in her guest bedroom playing with this chunky pink castle while her parents watched from the frame on the wall. They always terrified me. A man and woman, dressed plainly, sitting together and staring straight into the camera, but it was how they stared. Two pairs of black eyes, shadowed from the poor exposure, looking directly at me. That's how it was with all her family photos, her parents, her second husband's parents, all with black eyes and a compulsion for staring into your soul. They were saints our family worshipped, a figure whose

past was not acknowledge and the miracles they created were their children. Free of sin once the past is forgotten, but that's not how it should be. Saints are not needed to hang on our neck or our wall, they need to be questioned: who are you and where do you come from? This chapter deals with those questions because my family's religious makeup is intrinsically tied to Moravian Falls and the Brushy Mountains, the very power center they drew their career, love, and in the end their fall from.

The Old House: First Floor



Design: K.S.

1) Age: 12

My stomach churns on lackluster clustered stars sitting in the empty box of red wine.
Night trails on. My hand pressed against my belly, full of brownie batter
And drink, sickly sweet and full blooded.
A ouroboros traces its racetrack from my eyes to the screen till morning comes
And the pain finally subsides.

2) Age: 7

“Son of a bitch, yer hiding cards.”

The tables shake with heavy fists, from the cracks falls loose dirt. Tin cans cover whatever surface not occupied from hands and Queens facing down. Uncle Jimmy scratches his chin then right side, a tell. His hand hovers on the bench, picking up the can. Too low for this early in the game.

“What the—“ He lowers his head to see me, curled at the base of his feet.

3) Age: 17

This is it, isn't it? The wooden table curls against my touch.

Isn't it just. The electricity hums, but the warmth that once overflowed

The pots and pans filled with cabbage soup and milk for stew fills no more.

Not even the faint whimpering of the pipes is heard when you put your ear to the faucet. “You ready?”

My hand, unsteady, pulls the brass knob to a close.

4) Age: 8

There is a door and behind all doors must be a room.

Yet you look on the other side. Not even the door itself.

Tao Paw put his painting in front of it. Seeing it as ugly,

Needing a spruce up. I stood in front of the painting

Seeing the door. Who lives behind there, and who do they send for?

5) Age: 10

In the comfort of my bed, I am always surrounded by the whispered word

Of child. Early morning shakes my shoulder, yet

I turn to look to see the likeness of people standing outside the windows.

Long stretches of a human shadow, layered in opaqueness

One after the other till the windows are consumed.

“The house like us, it wouldn't touch our family.”

So I lie still as trout abandoned by low tide

To listen to the whispered word of child.

6) Age: 7

Kayla and I decided if we went in through one door,

Logically we'd returned out the one beside it.

I put my head in, my hair breathed on by the coarse fabrics

Of scratchy sweaters and pale dyed tunics.

The other door would be open and you could see the light shining in

Against the other clothes, yet we knew.

You go full body in and you ain't comin' out.

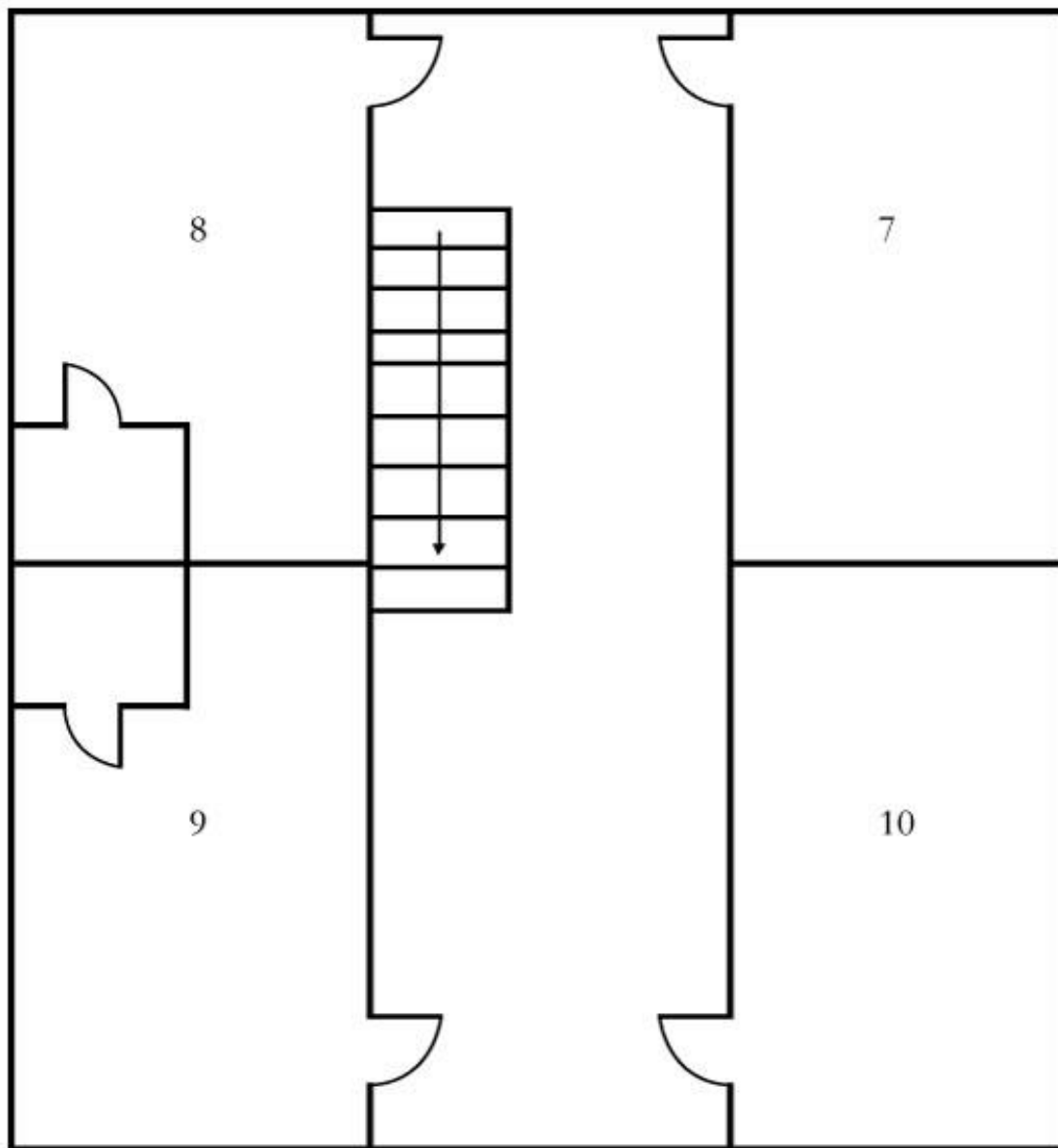
We tested it with bouncy balls, crumbled balls of paper, and whatever loose we found roaming in the sizzling afternoon.

Some would return, some wouldn't, so logically,

If we tested it ourselves, on ourselves, we'd be lost

In the home.

The Old House: Second Floor



Design: K.S.

7) Age: 14

If God needed a view of the mountain he'd sit on the foot of the bed,
Cushioned by rose printed sheets that smelled of moles rooting their noses
In farm dirt, prying out, that which the farmer wanted buried.
He'd like the quiet. I never did, told him so, kneeled beside the same bed.

Homes never need to be quiet. They need to talk to you.
Move with each sleepless turn and with each cracked knuckle and back
And neck from coming back from the field.
Sit, sir, because I can sit still no longer.

8) Age: 11

I've seen the sacred and been taught what a church looks like.
It's a building with bells strung above it and windows that are the same as stories.
Yet Tao Paw's room was the church, the steeple, and the confessional
For his own personal use. Go in when the sun has finally settled on the hanging line.
The floor is bare and splintered, like fingernails digging up.
Strokes of blues, reds, and colors unseen to the human eye blot out the walls.
In the center rests an empty easel. Reflecting that window,
Casting the imprint of a broken tree limb that stands frightful.
Then leave before the hand guides you out, passing the hollow ground.

9) Age: 12

My mother snores beside me, face half stifled and dug into her pillow. My eyes droop
then rise like a curtain operated by a drunk. Listen. My eyes pull open, wide and trained.
A sound hidden amongst the wolves' howl coming from the mountain A faint clink of
body. I turn my head to face the door, one part fear, two parts curiosity, a curse of my
childhood. In the static of the room, floated a pair of two glowing yellow eyes. Two
lightening bugs, joined in some matrimony, I thought and could prove, but they floated
in synch and the light could be dosed then start again quickly as it went. They blinked.
They came closer—I turned my head, matching my mother. I saw the yellow glow even
in the dark of my eyelids, a mourning stain till waking.

10) Age: 8

I was taught the secret language
Spoken under breath and over dale, to the smallest rock to the corner of a room.
A translation could be found in cards. Ornate, fine filigree in painted figures and
words lined the bottom: the translation.
The pictures spoke to me better than their titles,
But do it right, do it sound said Bubby. She sat in front of me in my tent of fortune
And fate, wrapped in stars and webbed gold. Crossed legs mirrored.
The language was fluent, the meaning separate and spectral.
I held the booklet with tiny fingers and read out of my Bubby's cards meant.
Wid-ow. The word triggered tears. The tiny table was pushed over and she rushed
out.
My mother left me with the only words that mattered: Some are not ready for the
future in their present.

Pagan Child

My Bubby created a tenacious monster when she held my palm out
and traced my future by ridges and branches that held every promise.
She bought cards with bright pictures and weird numbers and told me
“These hold the future. They know all and will teach you accordingly.”

Standing on my tippy toes, I stared in the scorched metal pot
cabbage leaves and copper pennies stirred together then paused
peacefully in the boiling bath. Bubby stood behind, hand steady on my shoulder.
“We’re gonna be rich. We’ll be so rich we won’t know what to do with it.”

My fingers hurt, but Bubby says that makes the magic work better.
The tiny house built from soggy branches and moss comes together
after many sunsets exploring in the cavern creek.
I set it on a tiny island and so softly I hear fluttering, nearly laughter.

Bubby says I can see things. Special is the word, she spits it at me.
Even when I tell her that eyes follow me when I sleep
she brushes it off and says, “You are supposed to see things.
I’ve taught you well.” I don’t tell her how the eyes are rotting
and glazed over yellow. I don’t tell her that the eyes follow her too.

The smoke floats up from the fire in precious curls.
“Look for the signals, faces... words can show up too.”
The gray bites back at the sky and then I see it.
A body tied to a column, arms fastened and black hole screaming,

against some desperate backdrop of woods whom known me well.
Some desperate body, upon burning body hoisted above – screaming.
“What do you see?” sincerely and desperate, Bubby hovers behind the body.
“See? I see something.” And the body stays screaming, on that tiny island forking
to creek and home.



An Education

Sept. 16th Prehistoric	Aug. 30th 1752	Aug. 20th 1891	August 1906	Jul. 4th 1913	Sept. 15th 1938	Sept. 18th 1938	Sept. 17th 1993	Jul. 4th 2004	Sept. 18th 2010	Oct. 25th 2012
N.C. is Born	Moravian's search for N.C. land	The Old House is built.	The Old Kentucky Home is sold to Julia Wolfe.	Irvin Pipes (Great Great Uncle) is arrested for murder.	Thomas Wolfe dies at 38.	Thomas is buried.	Savannah Joyce Wade is born.	Amy L. Wade marries Peter G. Krum.	Lila Anderson Pipes Pardue dies at 94.	Old House burns down.

Self Immolation (Dear Little One)

I wanted to die in a fit of glory.
My sickness tested my foundations—the rotting teeth, the swollen ankles.
Thankless in all I have given.

You have worried, dying to save me at the end of my rope.
Fixation on this old shell, what it's given and what you gave.
A lifetime unforgiven for the family that forged me.

I taught you lying, calling it fiction helps you swallow.
Then there were the graves, in the well, the farm, the county seat
where you played games and they played back.

Here is my final lesson. First, do no harm.
Second, swallow being afraid. Third, follow where your feet lead you,
even to bedlam.

I ache, my jaws growing sore while your uncle asks for more.
More money, more time, more coals on his fire.
I tire, little one, from the hate that's throttled this ground.

You'll hear this too late.
The fuse has flickered and the bolts are breaking down.
My feet are burning.

Cesspool of Sin

“Levo Oculos Meos in Montes”

I Lift My Eyes to the Mountain – UNC Asheville Motto

High Hanging Mothlight

At 11 o'clock after work, when my feet ache and my back feels of pin prick bites, I drive the long way home. When I curve around the First Baptist Church, I feel it in my gut. A self fulfilling prophecy that shakes off its dust whenever it feels the house near. I inch to the white left turn lane and must decide, will I tonight? The answer is yes, regardless of the numbing pain and soreness from hours of labor. I turn in and see it, my high hanging mothlight. A gem of late 19th century architecture, with a cream exterior and stained windows that in the night absorb the lonely, all those florescent lights of the hotels surrounding. I park, using these few minutes to tug on my coat and clean my glasses, there is a certain state of dress one must have to greet the house.

I walk up. It's a house not home, how something can be a picture and not a portrait. It was never a home, not even when families lived here. When you walk up the three stone steps onto the painted porch, you can feel it, like pressing two fingers against its outstretched neck. It feels so alive at night. I've been during the day when it likes to sleep, you feel the domesticity about it, and hiding its true nature. Right now, when the orange street lamps glow like candles in the windows and the darkness hangs like a military coat onto the scalloped roof, it feels alive. So I sit on the swinging porch, close my eyes, and listen.

At first, you hear distant drunk comradery, the quick clicks of heels on concrete, and someone, just one, crying, usually high up in one of the hotel rooms, but keep listening. Further past the now. I hear it so softly then see it so suddenly, that I am convinced of visions or rather

given an eyeglass into something unknown, a fragment of the past. A boy, six or so, pressing his ear to the ground and watching the hallway light. Someone is walking in the dead of night. It is not his father, pass out drunk in the parlor with an unfinished tumbler of bourbon by his head or his mother, awake, leaning over her desk to work on finances. The tick of tapping her pen on her desk drawer blends in almost perfectly with the stray crickets outside her window. His siblings rest as peacefully as they were taught to, but the boy, Tom, eyes wide and obsessed with the womb of darkness watched the light and watched the shuffle of shadows past his door.

A shock of laughter shakes me from box seat. I open my eyes to watch a couple lean on each other like roman pillars. It's the noises that feed the house, reminds it of his old days. Noises strengthens its foundations. Whether the house replays the boy's fear every night or if that's the house's favorite memory—it stays constant and loud, but only if you put your ear to its neck.

The Revenant

Tom lays his head on chest and says my name over and over again like a forgotten incantation. It shocks me. How it grips me by the throat to test my eyes. I don't have the heart to tell him he is suffocating me. His head is weighing heavy against my breast and that frame of his, a 6'6 giant with gentle hands, act as stones pressing me for confession. This wasn't what I was expecting. I was less practiced with summoning. Call on me for luck conjured by a pinch of allspice or even ask what the face of your future husband looks like, but anything involving the dead, I'm a novice.

It was late. My computer screen was starting to burn my eyes and my wrists were aching from the constant typing. I laid my head back, the student song of drowsiness and red wine was swinging around my ears. My eyes trailed my bookcase casually when the thought came to me. I was desperate for a muse, inspiration, a physical spark to boost my writing into full fledged greatness. *Look Homeward, Angel* was sticking out, teetering on the shelf, when it spoke to me. Thomas Wolfe—all I knew of the man was from an academic stand. He was a man of world renown, eccentric in his genius, and lived and died no more than 15 miles away from where I was sitting. He was perfect practice, nothing more.

The ritual took two minutes. A fluid motion of white candle wax and a single prick of the finger. I stood, rubbing my hands together in nervous desperation. He wouldn't appear.

Out of the corner of my eye a figure emerged. It was like a shadow grown thick, then the blackness surrounding it melted off to reveal someone only familiar from the book sticking out of my bookshelf.

Tom took me in his hand and I stumbled back onto my bed where we have stayed since. His arms wrapped around my torso are comforting somehow, like a child scared of a storm and

sees comfort in a warm body. I take slow breathes, so not disturb what trance he is in and to savor each breath. The only sound from him is my name, whispered in his Southern drawl. The copper lights wrapped around my window make him look like a boy. It's not just the softness of the light, but how his cheeks are puffed out like stuffed with cotton candy and round face, full and cheeks pinched red. His eyes fluttered slowly in solemn fatigue.

He needed be to be cared for, but I needed to talk. "Tom..." I started, but his grip tightened and his head buried deeper.

"Are you a ghost?" I managed to ask, my hand combing through his hair.

"No," he said. "I am not a ghost."

His weight shifted and I could feel him looking at me.

"What do you intend to write? An encyclopedia of hell? What is its guts, the glory? Is it worthy of your hand?"

The once soft light started to buzz and grow intense, the longer I avoided his question. I didn't have the heart to tell him I was stuck. The weeks and months of constant typing, but not a single thing to use. It like a language, foreign in tone and a cipher in translation, of mountain and hell and what circles like a beast to the heart in a valley.

"Tom— I'm scared."

His brown suit crumpled, like wings folding in.

"I know" Though this moment couldn't have lasted more than ten minutes, it felt like a lifetime of motions, the fall, the foreward, the proem, the board breaking and out stumbles drunks and promises that sound like the creaking of bedsprings. The cycle: the fall, the foreword, the confession. Procession into the heart of the mountain.

He held tighter till my eye drew heavy and my breathing lessened, like a dream of rotating stars behind my eyelids.

The fall, the rush, the door. Opening to another, bright lights once soft now heavy with indention and all I hear is my name, over and over again.

O Lost

The disease of prophecy is genetic.
Shared by women you see. My mother, your mother, knew death and treated it like a loose
chicken through the kitchen.
It's the language I think.
Certain syllables containing moments.
An articulation of rectification from what leaves our mouths.
It cannot suffice to prove what an angel can do.
Ask me to share what I have seen.
I have seen the turn of a century, a screw stripped, digging deeper and deeper in America's
backside.
I have seen the turn of adolescence, a presence, something *like* God
Who loves the taste of blackberries and mountain women.

A woman saw the same, named Julia, but she buttoned her lip,
Pressed bills together in comfort.
But she saw it all her life.
While she scrubbed her fingers, blooming pink dogwoods.
While she shared consumer goods with men, their insides festering.
Visions of a coming season
Unlike winter frost or spring rain.
Brimstone, a stone angels kiss, and her husband's blooms paling in the blackened sun.

Armageddon comes quietly.
Takes over her heart than eyes—soon turns smoke, passing out of her mouth.
Julia tried to say the things she saw.
Prophecy, she said was genetic, a family curse.
Her sons, husband, father, liked to nod.
Awareness in the place of acceptance.

As mother's right, she told her youngest that he must be careful
for the end of the world was near. She shouldn't be so terribly alone
in knowing.
My mother knew better than showing me what The End meant.
Instead, she held me and said "You are not alone."

First Date

We're right near it swear it, see across the street—hold my hand.
Cock alley, sorry no Chicken alley, story straight.
Story, story of course you want a story, god that hunger reminds me.
A doctor in some old stage coach days came to the bar that leads back
here, where you are standing and in some scuffle for some girl's honor
he stood, holding against the poppy stain on his shirt
stepped once, then two then all at once fell poppies blooming.

Where to now... the phallic nexus of Downtown—hold my hand.
Left here.

Stop. Stand.

Little more to the right.

Right here, in the height of the stock market crash, a man
like you, desperate, jumped from the top. He was scraped like the bottom of a shoe
into some box then someone, like some joke drew a bullseye.

Dot marks the spot.

I meant desperate kindly, I meant it in the way I want to mean it later
in bed with the lights warmed low.

I have somewhere else.

Not too far, just a long straight street, but still—hold my hand.

That fog creeping in just right for what happens next.

The house appears out of no where special, like a head of pollen.

This...this is my weakness. White crown molding, stained glass,
goddamn that porch swing—lets sit.

This relic of old and sick has been here since since since
the date escapes me, but I know Thomas Wolfe was born in 1900.

A frightful night, a father raging drunk, his mother holding him like a cross.

I know he lived here sometimes under the wing of his mother,
but it's haunted in the way we're haunted.

It's not a ghost that lives here, darling, it's history.

Let me sing you history on this porch while the fog rolls by
and the lights warmed low, lets feel something worth—

sure. History can happen later, daze swirled into days and tomorrow
the fog will move on so—hold my hand.

Why do you Glorify the South?

Why do you dress it up?

Call it pretty names—

How do you seek ghosts in the intellectually beaten trailer parks
and find souls in baby Klansman dragging their torches underneath feet?

How dare you see a forbidden world full of wonder and mysticism in the poor and broken
churches that line the highways like crosses covered in roses.

Glory, I say slowly, picking words out so carefully
laid out in my head like a Sunday dress.

When I go back home: I see houses and buildings smaller than I left them,
pets buried in the ground their ribs extending to something holier.

Yes. Many are poor, most missing teeth and their starved bodies dressed in camouflage
that hangs off of them like soiled lace curtains.

The girls are told, somehow and someday, that God or their father doesn't want their thighs
spread before they are sold off.

Sitting inside their tin dwellings they wait for beginnings, ends, and forgivings
that only they can give themselves.

Glory is understatement. Ghosts are nothing more than a story when you have needles sticking
out of arms and welfare checks passing hands.

Hell makes itself out of pines and cracked paved roads.

It rests in creek boiling red to the middle school columns rising from smoke circles
From the neon red light dying out OPEN 24 HOURS to the yellow brick pawn shop whose
owner expired behind the counter.⁸

It was the shot that shook the tri-county area.⁹ Murder was no longer internal.

It was no longer the light drifting out of someone's eyes, or the way a body curled after the tears
were dried.

Murder was the answer to an empty stomach.

A boy, a year younger than I, woke up, shot his father and a girl, who sat 2 feet away from me.
Her seat remained empty for the rest of the semester.

*He killed my baby*¹⁰

Maybe it could've been different, the gun allergic to his palm, the father switching his life for the
girl with an unmarked future.

⁸ Tony Myers was killed on Dec. 28, 2009 at Granite Gun and Pawn

⁹ Myers murder was the second murder in 10 years [in Granite Falls]

¹⁰ Donald Malick, 16, killed Casey Marie Moore, 19, and attempted to kill Donald Malick II on
April 28 2010 around 3:10 pm.

Glory tastes different growing around empty seats.
Its battered and fried in butter, drunk with cream and
crunchy like eggshells.
You consume it daily and nightly, over your food and kneeled beside your bed.

Glory has poisoned us all, but you must glorify
to survive.

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Unitas Fraitum

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